United Nations A/53/554

General Assembly

Distr.: General
29 October 1998

Original: English

Fifty-third session
Agenda item 33
Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies

Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies

Report of the Secretary-General

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Introduction	1–2	2
II.	Follow-up process to the Third International Conference of New or Restored Democracies on Democracy and Development	3–14	2
III.	Activities carried out by the United Nations system in democratization and governance	15–72	3
	A. Building a political culture through human rights observance and monitoring	15–24	3
	B. Mobilization of civil society	25–33	5
	C. Electoral assistance	34–38	6
	D. Free and independent media	39–40	7
	E. Enhancing the rule of law	41–46	7
	F. Improving accountability, transparency and quality of public sector management and democratic structures of government	47–72	8
IV.	Concluding observations	73–75	12

98-32826 (E) 131198

I. Introduction

1. In its resolutions 50/133 of 20 December 1995, 51/31 of 6 December 1996 and 52/18 of 21 November 1997, the General Assembly welcomed the three reports of the Secretary-General on the ways in which the United Nations system could support the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies (A/52/513; A/51/512; A/50/332 and Corr.1). The Assembly also commended the activities undertaken at the request of Governments to support the efforts to consolidate democracy, as reflected in the Secretary-General's three reports. The Assembly encouraged the Secretary-General to continue to improve the capacity of the Organization to respond effectively to the requests of Member States in their efforts to achieve the goal of democratization.

2. In its resolution 52/18, the Assembly asked the Secretary-General to submit to the it, at its fifty-third session, a report on the implementation of that resolution, including innovative ways and means to enable the Organization to respond effectively and in an integrated manner to requests from Member States for assistance in the field of democratization. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request.

II. Follow-up process to the Third International Conference of New or Restored Democracies on Democracy and Development

3. By its resolution 51/31, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, Member States, the appropriate specialized agencies and bodies of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations to cooperate in the holding of the Third International Conference of New or Restored Democracies on Democracy and Development. The Conference took place at Bucharest from 2 to 4 September 1997.

4. As described in my report to the fifty-second General Assembly (A/52/513), the Conference was successful in bringing together actors from all parts of society. The discussions and suggestions were far-sighted and realistic. As part of its conclusions, the Conference recommended that a mechanism, including Government representatives, representatives of the United Nations system and civil society, should be established to follow up on its results.

5. Since the Conference, the Government of Romania (the current Chair of the Conference) has played a leading role in the follow-up process. In early 1998, the Permanent Mission of Romania to the United Nations arranged the first meeting to introduce the follow-up mechanism and to discuss how to move the process forward.

6. The participants in the follow-up mechanism are representatives from interested countries, in particular those countries involved in organizing the International Conferences of New or Restored Democracies, the United Nations system, academia and non-governmental organizations.

7. The main purpose of the follow-up mechanism is to implement the recommendations of the Bucharest Conference; to plan for the next Conference in an organized manner; to that end to channel information about country programmes directed at consolidating democratic development, to assist in promoting communication and improved understanding among new or restored democracies, as well as their collaboration with traditional democracies, and to share the progress made by each participating country towards democratization.

8. The follow-up mechanism met several times during spring and summer 1998. It was agreed that the focus should be on practical projects, and that duplication of work with other programmes should be avoided. It was important to make a greater effort toward spreading information about the work being carried out in the United Nations system and by civil society pertaining to democratization and good governance. A short summary of the follow-up mechanism's main proposals is set out below.

Creation of Web sites on democratization and governance

9. The follow-up mechanism agreed that Web sites on democratization and good governance should be established. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) offered to host and maintain A Web site on democratization and governance. The site was established within UNDP's existing governance home page on 15 October 1998.[1] The Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Department of Political Affairs also offered to establish Web sites within their existing home pages and link them to the Web site created by UNDP.[2]

Democracy forum

10. The Democracy Forum is a discussion platform within the framework of the Conference of New or Restored Democracies. Its purpose is to give heads of State and

Government and other eminent personalities an opportunity to discuss democratic processes and share experiences in democratization efforts, and to organize expert meetings and seminars. The Government of Romania, as the Chair of the follow-up mechanism, has encouraged permanent missions to the United Nations to inform the Permanent Mission of Romania when high-level personalities or specialists in democratization and good governance are visiting United Nations Headquarters.

"Inventory of inventories"

11. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs has compiled extensive information on inventories, databases and directories pertaining to democratization and governance; which is to be included on the Web site created by UNDP. This "inventory of inventories" will be a helpful tool to obtain information about the work carried out in the fields of democratization and good governance.[2]

Self-assessment by Governments

12. With a view to establishing a better understanding of the impact of the efforts undertaken by the United Nations system and other partners in helping Governments to consolidate and promote democracy, the Government of Romania has initiated a project of self-assessment by Governments regarding the democratization and governance assistance provided to them. The purpose is to help Governments to articulate their own needs and to improve current projects and activities. In September 1998, the Government of Romania sent out a letter (containing a checklist and a number of questions related to the process of democratization) to the countries participating in the International Conferences of New or Restored Democracies. Based on an analysis of the responses, the follow-up mechanism will decide whether or not there is a basis for initiating an in-depth self-assessment project by a limited number of countries. For this purpose, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has prepared a draft proposal, together with the Conflict Management Group of Cambridge, Massachusetts.

13. On 22 September 1998, a Ministerial Meeting of New or Restored Democracies was held at United Nations Headquarters; the Meeting endorsed the proposals by the follow-up mechanism. Mrs. Janet Jagan, the President of Guyana and the keynote speaker, offered to host a seminar in her country in order to maintain the momentum and move the follow-up process forward. Mr. Andrei Gabriel Plesu, the Foreign Minister of Romania and Chairman of the Ministerial Meeting, proposed a meeting of the follow-up mechanism at the expert level in April 1999 in Romania with a view to discussing the development of indicators and a code of conduct for democratization, as suggested in the recommendations of the Bucharest Conference.

14. The establishment of the follow-up mechanism has been an encouraging sign of the progress being made to improve coordination between Government representatives, the United Nations system and civil society. Within the United Nations, measures are also being taken to enhance coordination. At the first regular session of 1998 of the Organizational Committee of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), members discussed a proposal for a United Nations system-wide agenda for democratization and governance. It was agreed that ACC members would designate focal points responsible for coordinating the work carried out in the field of democratization within their respective organizations, and I am pleased to report that focal points have now been appointed in most ACC bodies.

III. Activities carried out by the United Nations system in democratization and governance

A. Building a political culture through human rights observance and monitoring

15. New or restored democracies, particularly those that have endured internal wars, often face an uncertain future. Therefore, two linked objectives of international assistance are pivotal: prevention of the recurrence of conflict and the creation of conditions for a lasting democratic process. Programmes devoted to promoting respect for human rights can contribute to that end through facilitating national reconciliation and assisting in institution-building and law reform, as well as by empowering people through the promotion and protection of human rights, development of a human rights culture and establishing effective remedies against violations of human rights. Recent developments in many countries demonstrate that an effective system for protecting human rights, including the rule of law, is an indispensable condition for stopping the vicious cycle of violence and conflict, and thus for ensuring democratic development.

16. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) offers assistance to countries in transition to democracy through monitoring relevant human rights developments at national and local levels. This activity provides both the Government concerned and the

international community, in general, with the information necessary to shape programmes and projects most appropriate for a given context. UNHCHR stands ready to cooperate with Governments wishing to establish such activities in their countries or for building national capacities to that end.

17. During 1997-1998, some 45 technical cooperation projects were carried out by UNHCHR in over 25 States. In addition, nine projects were implemented at the regional level and nine at the global level. As of 30 June 1998, there was a technical cooperation field presence in Burundi, Cambodia, El Salvador, Gaza (Palestine), Guatemala, Malawi, Mongolia, Rwanda, South Africa, the United Republic of Tanzania and Togo. There are now more technical cooperation personnel in the field than ever before, reflecting in particular the increased number of multi-year, large-scale projects.

18. UNHCHR also supports new and restored democracies through the human rights machinery, which contributes to better promotion and protection of human rights. A particularly important role in this context is played by the Human Rights Committee, which while monitoring the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, advises State Parties specifically on the content, scope and methods of realization of the right of every citizen to take part in the conduct of public affairs, to vote and be elected at genuine periodic elections and to have access to public service in the country. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination also examines the implementation of political rights, including the rights to participate in elections, and to stand for election without distinction as to race, colour, or national or ethnic origin.

19. Building national institutional capacity is another important requirement for creating a stable and sustainable political culture and respect for human rights. In this context, the Democratization, Human Rights and Governance Project in Uzbekistan initiated by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has as its main focus the promotion of human rights through capacity-building. The project begun in 1997, and has a three-fold focus: (a) technical assistance activities to assist the Parliamentary Commission on Human Rights to create an office of an ombudsman and a national centre for human rights; (b) giving citizens increased access to legal advice and assistance through the creation of a prototypical and replicable legal aid society; (c) providing upgraded technical computer facilities to judicial and legal professionals in order to enhance their capacity to communicate with each other and to gain access to information.

20. In 1994, UNDP began to support a programme in capacity-building in human rights that was launched two years earlier by the Ecuadorian military and that integrated human rights education into the training of its forces. It has resulted in more than 16,000 military staff participating in such training. Human rights workshops for all ranks of military personnel and seminars for high-ranking officials have helped to develop a greater sensitivity toward human rights and democracy, as evidenced by the non-violent actions of the armed forces during the presidential crisis of February 1997. A further result of the workshops has been to build trust between human rights non-governmental organizations and the military.

21. UNDP has recently adopted a policy document on human rights, which was followed by an in-house workshop to mainstream a new policy for its technical assistance programme in this field at the national and regional levels. An inventory of human rights projects in UNDP is being developed. A regional conference on the theme "Human rights for human development" took place at Yalta, Ukraine, in September 1998, as a joint initiative between the Government of Ukraine, the UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Twenty-seven delegations from Eastern Europe and the CIS attended the Conference. The approximately 300 conference participants included high-level government officials, heads of parliamentary committees for human rights, ombudsmen, representatives of the judiciary, civil society, including representatives of minorities, and the private sector.

22. The Conference emphasized the indivisibility of human rights, consistent with UNDP's sustainable human development approach. The Conference fostered an exchange of experiences and best practices in the field of human rights, and helped to identify needs and strategies for promoting transparency and institution-building. Several initiatives emerged on organizing networks to bring the different segments of government and civil society that deal with human rights together in order to exchange best practices. Implementation of existing international and national laws was identified as a crucial need for many countries in the region.

23. Concerning equal rights for women, the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Secretariat conducts research and shares information on women in political decision-making to monitor the incidence of female representation in the public sector, in line with the Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/4, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to disseminate

information on a regular basis on the composition of national decision-making institutions at the highest levels, desegregated by sex on a national, regional and international basis.

24. The work of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in the area of democratization and good governance is focused on ensuring the promotion of human rights, especially the rights of children, and is guided in particular by the principles and provisions of the Convention of the Rights of the Child. Efforts are being made to teach and apply child rights principles to children, families, parents, civil society organizations, Governments, non-governmental organizations and media. For example, UNICEF works with mayors and municipal governments to promote decentralized planning and management that invites broad participation from all sectors of society. In Croatia, such activity resulted in a plan of action being presented by children to the mayors of 15 cities, and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNICEF assisted in the organization of a "youth poll" in connection with the country's first post-war elections.

B. The mobilization of civil society

25. A vibrant civil society is the key to a successful democratization process. Without the participation and active contribution of the citizens to social life, a true democracy cannot grow and prosper. Promotion of public participation and the formation of well informed public opinion is essential in the process of consolidation of democracy and the maintenance of democratic values.

26. UNDP's support for civil society organizations often consists of encouraging partnerships between them and Governments in the formulation and implementation of UNDP-supported programmes. These initial collaborations can help to establish a dialogue between the Government and civil society. In Bangladesh, for example, UNDP encouraged the Government to enter into a partnership with non-governmental organizations for the reconstruction of housing after the devastating floods of 1990. The experience of this project reveals that the interaction of non-governmental and community-based organizations with the Government in project-development meetings can provide a powerful voice for the people most affected by the project itself.

27. An alternative way of encouraging dialogue is the UNDP-sponsored LIFE programme, which aims to improve the living conditions in low-income communities by financing small-scale projects to strengthen civil society and improve local governance. The Asia-Pacific 2000 programme is an example of UNDP's support for improving networks between civil society organizations. Similar goals are established for the civil society for poverty reduction programme in sub-Saharan Africa. This programme aims to reduce poverty by contributing to the establishment of an institutional environment for dialogue between civil society organizations and national policy makers.

28. In line with the Azerbaijan Government's commitment to achieve the establishment of civil society and within the framework of UNDP's programme for democracy, governance and participation, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs is implementing a non-governmental organization development project in Azerbaijan. The overarching goal of the project is to accelerate the development of civil society through support for and capacity-building of non-governmental and community-based organizations. This goal is being achieved through the establishment of a resource and training centre for non-governmental organizations. This is a management and technical support facility that provides much needed advice, assistance, training, equipment, information and know-how to fledgling non-governmental organizations in order to promote cooperation, networking, and interaction with the Government and within the non-governmental organizations community in Azerbaijan.

29. As one of the most representative components of civil society, trade unions are among the forces striving to achieve greater respect for human rights and social justice, promoting the values of solidarity and protecting the weakest members of society. They thus play an essential role in the transition to more democratic institutions. A large proportion of the International Labour Organization's (ILO) activities have been focused on Africa, where despite the hopes raised by the new era of democratization, the general decline in the economy and the worsening quality of working life have placed trade unions in a very difficult position. Further technical support has been provided to a series of meetings organized by the trade union movement and attended by representatives of governments and financial institutions. During 1996-1997, the ILO provided support for meetings of this type in a number of countries, including Benin, Bulgaria, the Congo, Croatia, Egypt, Guinea, the Philippines, the United Republic of Tanzania, Togo and Tunisia.

30. The urban management programme executed by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlement (Habitat), with funding from UNDP and several bilateral donors, has identified urban participatory governance as a priority theme. This involves supporting and building capacities of municipalities and city governments, by developing

methodologies that promote maximum stakeholder participation, and city consultations on urban governance, which are currently being conducted in the African, Asian, Arab and Latin American regions. The programme is preparing a generic policy paper on practical approaches to participatory governance at municipal and city levels, which will synthesize regional experiences and give policy options. The programme inputs are part of the overall Habitat effort to promote sustainable urban development, as outlined in the Habitat Agenda which was adopted by the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) at Istanbul in 1996.

31. Habitat also works with poor communities in urban and rural areas contributing to the strengthening and practical application of good governance and democratization at the local level. Through these programmes, residents of poor settlements and their community organizations are learning to formulate their collective needs for improving settlements (housing, water supply, sanitation and social services) through a democratic process of participation at the grass-roots level. They are also strengthening their capacity and skills for interacting with local government and non-governmental organizations, for the purpose of participating in the management of public and private sector investments in their settlements.

32. UNICEF, recognizing the essential value of the involvement of civil society in democracy, has promoted decentralization processes and the participation of communities at all levels of decision-making. Examples include children participating in the promotion of civic education and democracy in Mexico and in Colombia. A community initiative in the West Bank and Gaza promotes the involvement of children and young people in the development of their communities. In Chile, through opinion polls, and in Ecuador, through parliaments for children, children participate in the evaluation of areas of relevance to their lives.

33. The regional commissions have also extended their activities to involve civil society. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has, in collaboration with African civil society communities, established the African Center for Civil Society as a focal point and information centre for activities related to popular participation. Through this centre, ECA aims to expand its assistance to improving government and civil society relations and promoting civil society's role in democracy and good governance. The Human Settlements Section of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) is currently undertaking a research project on urban governance at the municipal level. The aim of the research is to examine to what extent private sector and civil society organizations and community groups are becoming partners in the development process, at the level of decision-making, planning and implementation.

C. Electoral assistance

34. The United Nations has been involved in electoral assistance since its founding in 1945. These efforts represent the culmination of decades of work in the field of elections, both in developing international standards and through assistance to Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories in their efforts to achieve self-determination. Since 1989, the United Nations has received over 140 requests for electoral assistance of some kind. Established in 1992, the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political Affairs is responsible for the coordination of the activities of the United Nations system in the field of electoral assistance.

35. Overall, the United Nations provides electoral assistance in a number of ways, including: (a) organization and conduct of elections; (b) supervision; (c) verification; (d) coordination and support for international observers; (f) support for national election observers; (g) technical assistance; and (vii) observation. A needs assessment mission evaluates the type of assistance needed, by discussing with the Government and the electoral authority the form of assistance that is most suitable.

36. UNDP plays an important role in providing technical support and assistance to electoral processes in close consultation with the Electoral Assistance Division. In Mozambique, for example, UNDP worked with the national elections commission to provide technical assistance for the organization of elections. Working at both the central and local levels, expertise was provided to Mozambican election authorities for all aspects of the electoral process, including logistics, civic education, training and legal and financial management. The elections in Mozambique had a number of positive outcomes, the most important of which was the universal acknowledgment of a transparently fair electoral procedure. More than 60,000 people were trained to support the electoral system, constituting an important resource for future elections.

37. Since 1990, UNHCHR has been involved in electoral assistance, with a particular emphasis on the legal and human rights aspects of elections, through its technical cooperation programme. The principal areas of election-related assistance include legal analysis and legislative assistance with regard to electoral laws and related

legislation; analysis and recommendations concerning the prevailing human rights environment and legal and institutional needs; support for civic education endeavours; prerequisites for free and fair elections; and the training of public officials with key roles in elections.

38. Peacekeeping operations sometimes play an important part in support of elections. The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) is responsible for the organization and conduct of a referendum to enable the people of Western Sahara, in the exercise of their right to self-determination, to choose between independence and integration with Morocco. The United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA), which was launched on 15 April 1998, is mandated to give advice and technical support to national electoral bodies regarding the electoral code and plans for the conduct of the legislative elections scheduled for November 1998. The Mission also provides advice and technical assistance in the area of good governance and the rule of law.

D. Free and independent media

39. An independent, free flow of information and unbiased, objective reporting are necessary for a balanced public opinion. United Nations efforts to promote democratization through support for free and independent media have formed an essential part of the Organization's work in the area of public information. For instance, in January 1998, the United Nations International Centre (UNIC) at Antananarivo organized a workshop for journalism students at the University of Antananarivo on the theme "Promoting new concepts of governance and sustainable development: the task of the media". In November 1997, UNIC Athens organized press briefings and provided media relations support for both local and regional conferences on the theme "Public service in transition: enhancing its role, professionalism, ethical standards and values".

40. UNICEF's Division of Communication has developed journalism training packages with the Thompson Foundation, a United Kingdom-based journalism school. The materials aim to encourage better standards of reporting, to support a more critical approach to the news and to encourage the development of a fair, more caring society in which everyone has an equal place, with a particular focus on women and children. Workshops utilizing the manuals have taken place in India, Sri Lanka, Mozambique, Romania, Kenya, Malawi, Nepal and Albania. Regional workshops have also taken place in Thailand and the South Pacific.

E. Enhancing the rule of law

41. One of the important challenges that most new or restored democracies face is establishing or re-establishing a fair, effective and efficient justice system based upon the rule of law. These democracies face a difficult challenge to establish or restore public confidence in institutions that have often been discarded by their subservience to power, corruption and violation of human rights.

42. Within the framework established by General Assembly resolution 45/107, entitled "International cooperation for crime prevention and criminal justice in the context of development", the United Nations Centre for International Crime Prevention has provided technical support to many new and restored democracies. Since 1990, the Centre has promoted, often in partnership with UNDP, major programmes and projects to build institutional capacity and improve governance within the justice systems of new and restored democracies. For instance, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Centre has just completed a multifaceted programme that addresses all the above aspects. In Kyrgyzstan, the Centre is acting as the cooperating agency for a nationally executed project to build a new central department in the Ministry of Internal Affairs to combat organized crime. In South Africa, the Centre is involved in projects dealing with preventing domestic violence, combating organized and commercial crime, and juvenile justice. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Centre is working with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on an extensive programme with the Government Ministries responsible for criminal justice. In Romania, it is involved in a project to combat corruption, and a similar project is being established in Lebanon.

43. Peace operations often include institution-building responsibilities that contribute to the development of the rule of law in post-conflict situations. The United Nations Civilian Police Mission in Haiti (MIPONUH) has been deployed to assist the Government of Haiti by supporting the professionalization of the Haitian National Police. The United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH) has worked to train the Police to operate according to the principles of democratic policing and to improve freedom of movement within the country. Its International Police Task Force (IPTF) cooperated with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

(OSCE) and the Stabilization Force to implement the municipal elections, and the elections for the Republika *Srpska Assembly*.

44. UNDP and other aid agencies faced one of the biggest governance challenge to date in Rwanda, where the system of government itself was all but destroyed during the 1994 war and genocide. The judicial arm of the State was particularly hard hit. Under a US$ 2.8 million project, efforts began to build and expand prisons, and under a parallel US$ 4.6 million project, a separate effort began to train a core of qualified legal professionals for the trials of persons suspected of taking part in the 1994 genocide. UNDP recruited 30 investigating lawyers from overseas to assist the Public Prosecutor's office and 20 judges to strengthen the circuit courts. Training was provided to 100 magistrates, 50 officers of the Public Ministry and 400 civilian prison guards.

45. Examples of UNICEF activities in promoting the rule of law or good governance include the administration of justice (juvenile justice system) programme, with support for information and training activities for judges and prosecutors, lawyers and law enforcement officials. It also provides support for the implementation of children's rights and the independence of the judiciary. UNICEF promotes advocacy for legislative and administrative reform, with particular attention focused on juvenile justice. UNICEF offices actively advocate legislative reform and provide technical assistance in instituting constitutional amendments and in the drafting of new laws. Activities of this kind have been supported in a large number of Latin American countries.

46. The World Bank helps new and restored democracies to strengthen the legal framework in areas ranging from laws regulating the market economy, such as defining property rights, company registration, operation and bankruptcy, and the functioning of financial institutions (Estonia, Hungary, Poland and many other transition economies) to those governing the formation and conduct of civil society organizations. Complementing this has been extensive support for judicial reform, including the training of judges, codification and publication of laws, and improvement of court administration (Argentina, the Russian Federation, the United Republic of Tanzania and Venezuela).

F. Improving accountability, transparency and quality of public sector management and democratic structures of government

47. The operational challenge for the United Nations system is to translate global and national goals of democratization and governance into sustainable project operations and adapt them to prevailing national and local requirements. Democracy and governance-related technical cooperation initiatives are not only complex but multifaceted. For their successful implementation, they require strong coordination and the provision of a coherent management framework. To maintain the credibility of the initiated activities, it is crucial that systems are put in place that make project management effective and foster implementation processes guaranteeing accountability, transparency and efficient management of resources. Project managers need to function as facilitators, bringing together diverse stakeholders and segments of society to work as a team towards common goals. These broad objectives guide the work of the United Nations system in the expanding area of governance and democratization in its various field programmes.

1. Governance

48. From the outset and until the early 1990s, the main focus of UNDP technical assistance in the area of governance was on strengthening the capacity of the State. In the 1980s, structural adjustment policies placed the performance of the public sector high on the political agenda, and the role of the State, its size, productivity and costs came into question. Accordingly, programme countries made increasing demands on UNDP to provide assistance to their public sectors, particularly in modern management. Governance was explicitly confirmed as a programming objective within UNDP in January 1997, with the adoption of a new policy document on governance. Although UNDP had been heavily involved in supporting governance programmes at the country level from its inception, the 1997 policy document recognized governance for the first time as a key component of sustainable human development. It also recognized that for people to realize their potential and enlarge their scope of choices, the social, economic and political environments must reflect notions of security, participation, cooperation, equity and sustainability.

49. Governance is defined as the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels and the means by which States promote social cohesion and integration and ensure the well-being

of their populations. It embraces all methods used to distribute power and manage public resources, and the organizations that shape government and the execution of policy. Good governance therefore depends on public participation as well as on being effective and equitable, and promoting the rule of law and the transparency of institutions. Governance encompasses the State but transcends it by including roles for both the private sector and civil society. As a result, UNDP programme interventions gradually moved away from the traditional public sector reform projects to focus more on (a) governing institutions, (b) decentralization and local governance, (c) urban management and (d) capacity development and learning tools/methodologies.

50. As part of its governance programme, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs is compiling a comprehensive inventory of governance projects/programmes. In its first stage, the project will survey 14 African countries. The project is commissioned by the UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa. It is expected to be extended to all the countries of Africa, including Governments and their development partners, to refine strategies for the formulation and implementation of governance-strengthening activities.

51. The United Nations Office of Project Services (UNOPS) is providing operational services for well over three hundred active projects and programmes related to democracy and governance, at an estimated annual budgetary volume in excess of US$ 100 million.

2. Democracy and development

52. Although the World Bank has no democratization programmes as such, it contributes to the strengthening of democratic institutions in new and restored democracies through its contributions to public sector reform, decentralization, legal framework and judicial reform, and through the increased use of participatory mechanisms in the sector-specific projects it finances. More generally, the Bank's support for economic and social development helps to build the foundations of good governance and democracy. Economic stagnation or weak growth exacerbates poverty. With inequality rising in many countries, the Bank's emphasis on inclusive development may be viewed as supportive of the democratic process in new and restored democracies.

53. In the past two years, special emphasis has been given by the Bank to helping countries to control corruption. This challenges the economic and social achievements of all new or restored democracies, undermines trust in government and can threaten their political sustainability. In economic terms, corruption, far from being the grease that oils a market economy, reduces investment and risks marginalizing a country in the global economy. In social terms, corruption places a disproportionate burden on the poor and widens income disparity. In a growing number of new or restored democracies, the World Bank has conveyed international experience in combating corruption through the mechanism of national integrity workshops. It has also helped government, business and civil society sectors (Albania, Georgia, Latvia, Nicaragua, United Republic of Tanzania, Ukraine and Uganda) to develop programmes to combat corruption and promote ethical behavior in public life. Surveys have been undertaken that measure the extent and cost of bribery in service delivery and in conducting transactions with government officials.

54. Across the world, the Bank is supporting economic reform programmes that reduce debts and strengthen institutional capacity, both in selected governmental agencies and in Governments as a whole. Critical agency reforms include the strengthening of tax administration and customs services through economic policy reforms, such as simplifying and lowering tax and tariff schedules, and through organizational changes, such as better pay and employment conditions, improved procedures, records management,and financial systems. In some cases (Ghana, Malawi, United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda) the Bank has supported the creation of more autonomous revenue agencies. Corruption in tax departments, especially customs, remains a widespread problem that threatens the integration of new or restored democracies into the global economy.

55. More broadly, the Bank is giving increased emphasis to public sector reform, recognizing the critical role that a well-performing State plays in the development process. In many new or restored democracies, the State sector is overextended and performs badly. The effort here is to help countries to redefine the role of the State, moving from a heavily interventionist paradigm to one in which the State's main function is to provide an enabling environment in which both the market economy and civil society can flourish. Typically, this means concentrating on functions that the State alone can provide and building its capacity to perform these functions. The challenge is to reform the core systems of government, such as budgeting and financial management, the civil service, procurement, records management and cabinet processes. A special thrust has been decentralization, helping countries to define the functions best carried out by subordinate tiers of government, and to create a clear framework of fiscal responsibilities and limits.

56. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) continues to work with the member countries of the United Nations in strengthening their economic management and enhancing economic performance. IMF provides assistance to countries emerging from crisis and conflict in three ways: (a) rehabilitating economic, fiscal, banking, finance and statistics structures; (b) helping the authorities to design a framework of economic and financial policies suitable to their circumstances; and (c) providing emergency financing under agreed policy packages to strengthen economic management and speed up recovery. The objective of the overall effort is to create a conducive policy and institutional environment for the return of domestic and external investor confidence and external financial assistance.

57. In the other emerging democracies, IMF focuses – depending on the specific needs of each country – on establishing economic and financial stability, effective fiscal policies that are also transparent, viable banking and financial systems, modern corporate governance for rapid integration into the global economy and strengthened human resource development. The overall objective will be to bolster high-quality growth, attract long-term foreign investment, minimize excessive market volatility, and facilitate rapid integration into the global economic, financial and trading system. The context for implementation will be through policy dialogue with individual member States, effective systemic surveillance and international cooperation, and capacity-building to enhance economic, financial and administrative institutions.

58. The work of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) is, inter alia, based on the recognition that market and private initiatives are dynamic agents of an expanding economy, without losing sight of the determining influence of good governance and an efficient but a reduced role of the State. As part of the overall democratic processes necessary for sustaining economic growth and development, good governance requires the presence of efficient management of resources.

59. The insufficient attention paid by many developing countries to the basic function of debt management was one of the contributing factors to the debt crisis of the 1980s. The development of appropriate administrative, institutional and legal structures for effective debt management requires the setting up of an adequate information system with detailed and aggregated data on loan contracts, past and future disbursements, and past and future debt service payments. There is also a need to develop national capacities to define and select appropriate debt strategies. All this contributes to good governance of the financial resources and obligations of a nation. The UNCTAD Debt Management and Financial Analysis System now covers over 40 countries, representing over 25 per cent of the outstanding debt of developing countries.

60. Within its mandate of promoting sustainable industrial development, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) supports efforts to strengthen and consolidate democratic development in new or restored democracies by fostering public-private partnerships and broadening popular participation in the field of industrial development. To help to improve government accountability, transparency and quality in the formulation of industrial policies and strategies, UNIDO promotes increased interactive dialogue between the public and private sectors. In UNIDO-supported projects, industrial policies and strategies emerge out of a consensus-building exercise as a joint undertaking of all the major stakeholders in the industrial sector. For example, UNIDO has started a programme to establish industrial partnership councils in 28 African countries as a mechanism to promote closer interaction and improved cooperation between the government and the private sector in the formulation of national policies and priorities for industrial development.

61. UNIDO is also supporting efforts of transitional economies in Central and Eastern Europe to consolidate democratic development by promoting regional and local development initiatives, establishing small business support networks and providing advice and assistance to restructure privatized enterprises. For instance, UNIDO is undertaking in-depth assessments of the basic conditions for accelerated growth in seven regions of Bulgaria, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation and Ukraine; assisting in the establishment and expansion of a network of small business support centres in Kyrgystan; and providing training to national business counsellors in Romania in enterprise restructuring.

62. To help to sustain progress in market reforms and broaden popular participation in mainstream economic activities, UNIDO is providing support to a number of African countries in developing and strengthening the private sector. For example, UNIDO is supporting the Ministries of Industry in Lesotho and Uganda in implementing privatization programmes and promoting private sector development. It is also providing technical advice and training to women entrepreneurs of Africa and in countries with economies in transition in business start-up operations, particularly in the food-processing, textile and garment industries.

3. Recent conferences and workshops on democratization and good governance

63. A number of seminars, workshops and conferences on good governance and democratization have recently been organized in Africa. The United Nations System-Wide Special Initiative for Africa creates opportunities for comprehensive and synergetic collaboration. ECA and UNDP, within their mandate to lead the consultations on governance, have jointly organized two annual Africa governance forums. The 1997 forum provided opportunities for dialogue on the state of governance in Africa. The 1998 forum discussed public accountability as an important factor in the long-term sustainability of the emerging African democracies.

64. Another initiative, organized by the members of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa and assisted by the Department of Disarmament Affairs, was a subregional conference on democratic institutions and peace in Central Africa, held at Bata, Equatorial Guinea, in May 1998. This endorsed a proposal for the establishment of a subregional parliament to foster the commitment of the Central African countries to democracy, peace and development. As requested by the participants, the future parliament would only be composed of democratically elected representatives designated by central African States where free and fair elections are held.

65. In March 1998, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs organized a major conference on Governance in Africa at ECA headquarters at Addis Ababa. Conference deliberations touched upon a wide range of issues relevant to the consolidation of the institutional foundations for good governance in Africa. ECA, in cooperation with the Global Coalition for Africa, organized a colloquium on the role of the military in political transition and economic development. This colloquium brought together representatives from military establishments, academicians, regional and subregional organizations, including the Economic Community of West African States, and multilateral and bilateral organizations.

66. Turning to other parts of the world, a regional conference on public service in transition on the theme "Enhancing the role, professionalism and ethical standards and values of public service" – was held at Thessaloniki, Greece, in November 1997. The purpose of the conference was to provide a forum for 21 countries in Central and Eastern Europe to discuss approaches to strengthen the performance and integrity of the civil service as a core component of good governance. The participants discussed the enormous political, economic and social transformation that the region is experiencing, as countries embark on reforms from a one-party to a pluralistic State and a centrally planned to a market-oriented economy. The conference was hosted by the Government of Greece and organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in cooperation with UNDP.

67. Habitat organized seminars and workshops in the promotion of good governance and democratization at the local level, capacity-building programmes on local leadership and settlement management training programme. Local government officials in Africa, Asia and Latin America participate in subregional workshops to upgrade their skills in managing human settlement programmes in housing, infrastructure and services. A particular focus is on assisting elected local government officials to manage their cities along the principles of good governance: democratic and participatory decision-making, transparent management of public sector funds and involvement of civil society representatives.

68. The United Nations University (UNU) in Tokyo has also organized workshops on democratization. The workshops have resulted in a number of books focusing on the conceptual issues and regional aspects of democracy and democratization, published by UNU Press.

4. New projects and seminars on democratization and governance

69. In order to promote a democratic culture around the world, the Director-General of UNESCO has established an international panel on democracy and development. This intellectual forum, composed of 20 personalities chosen from different regions of the world, is chaired by former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali. Its main goal is to advise the Director-General on how programmes of the Organization related to the fostering of democracy should be run, as well as to spur initiatives, mobilize partners and create synergies regarding the realization of this programme.

70. In 1995 UNESCO initiated a project to contribute to the promotion of democratic principles. Over the years, the project has organized several activities and conferences on governance and democratic principles around the world. The most recent was a conference at Maputo held in July 1998 on the theme "Africa facing globalization: the challenges of democracy and governorship". In 1999, a summit of heads of State of Africa on democracy and governance will take place at Pretoria; regional meetings on the same topic will be held separately.

71. The First Conference of the Americas on New or Restored Democracies is planned to take place in Costa Rica in 1999, organized by the *Programma Centroamericano para la Sostenibilidad Democratica* together with the United Nations University of Peace, to follow-up on the recommendations of the Third International Conference of the New or Restored Democracies. The main objective of the event is to assemble representatives of the Governments and civil society of Latin America and the Caribbean in order to evaluate and share the advances made in democratization. Pilot country studies are also being commissioned for the Conference.

72. The Conference in Costa Rica is one of a series of seminars, workshops and conferences organized or planned under the auspices of the International Conferences of New or Restored Democracies. Earlier, such seminars were organized at New Haven, United States of America by United Nations Studies at Yale University; in New York by Parliamentarians for Global Action; in Helsinki, and Svetogorsk, Russian Federation, by the Finnish Institute for Foreign Affairs and the National Research and Development Centre of Welfare and Health, with the contribution of other organizations. Planned meetings in 1999 include a seminar in Guyana and a meeting of the follow-up mechanism at the expert level at Bucharest.

IV. Concluding observations

73. The democratization and governance activities presented in section III above are illustrations of the many projects and programmes carried out by United Nations funds, programmes and agencies as well as by the Secretariat in this expanding field. The projects cover a wide range of areas, from local to global programmes, from conferences to field work, from assistance of Governments to mobilization of civil society. These activities testify to an increasing range of work by the United Nations in the field, as its entities devote greater attention to the process of democratization and the promotion of good governance.

74. Given the increased interest by the international community in the process of democratization, I very much welcome the support expressed last year by the General Assembly for the decision of the Third International Conference of New or Restored Democracies to convene the Fourth International Conference on the African Continent. The Government of Benin has graciously offered to host this Conference.

75. In order to ensure the success of the Fourth International Conference and improve our understanding of the democratization process, it is important that extensive preparation is undertaken before the Conference. In this regard, the follow-up mechanism described in section II above can play a very valuable role. The proposed seminars to be held in Guyana and Romania in 1999 offer excellent opportunities for initiating these preparations.

Notes

[1] The Web site has the following title "Democratization and Governance: International Conferences on New or Restored Democracies", and can be found at the following address: http://www.undp.org/undp/governance.

[2] The Department's Web sites will have the same title as the above title. The Department of Political Affairs Web site can, in due course, be found at: http://www.un.org/Depts/dpa. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs Web site can, in due course, be found at: http://www.un.org/esa.